

The Builder.

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THE majority of men place great dependence on chance. So long as an event is only probable, they seem to think it unnecessary to guard against it, if in so doing they must subject themselves to a positive inconvenience or expenditure, however slight. Illustrations of this fact, in different walks, will occur to every reader; but they especially offer themselves as connected with sanitary arrangements. A certain state of things may be proved to lead to illness and death; the members of a family living in such a state,—occupying, for example, an ill-drained, ill-ventilated house, may find themselves always out of health, may constantly be forced to say,—“this must arise from the circumstances under which we are living,” and yet go on year after year without any effort to effect a change, or to escape from the fate which hangs surely over them. It may not be the house after all, they say; if we were certain, it would be another thing; we may be better presently: our neighbours are similarly circumstanced, and do not complain; to get a sewer and good drains, and plenty of water, is out of the question; and moving would be a trouble, *et cetera*, *et cetera*: and so they persuade themselves into the endurance of what will as certainly lessen their enjoyment of life, and weaken their moral as well as physical power, if not hurry them prematurely into the grave, as if they had swallowed a known poisonous drug with that express intention.

Last week, in the ordinary discharge of professional duty, we went over a house in a respectable part of Westminster, which will afford us a case in point. Were it a solitary instance we would name it specifically, without regard to private interests; but unfortunately it is not so, and injury might thus be done to individuals without corresponding advantage to the public. On entering the back parlour a slight but unpleasant odour led to an inquiry, from which we learnt that a cesspool adjoined it, the contents of which were pumped away every week, its size being small. To avoid filling this too quickly, the yard, a small one, was made the receptacle of much that was offensive. At times the lower part of the house was unbearable, and in particular weather the occupants had been forced to confine themselves to the one pair floor. It was scarcely necessary to ask the effect this had on those who lived in the house,—the sickly appearance of several told the story, but only in part. The wife of the person who held the house had died recently, after much sickness; a female lodger in the parlours, within the six years during which she had lived there, had suffered three violent attacks of typhus fever, caused wholly, her medical attendant told her, by the bad air, and had narrowly escaped with her life; while the old servant, who was chiefly confined to the back kitchen, assured us that the smell made her sick constantly, and that she had been told by the doctor she would be killed if she remained there. And killed she unquestionably may be.

None of the occupants, however, manifested any intention of making a change: as one of

them said, they didn't quite understand how a smell could produce illness, and thought it just possible it might have occurred if they had been elsewhere, because “illness is what all are subject to!”

Such insatiation, under other circumstances, would scarcely be believed. As we have said already, this house is in a respectable part of Westminster; a wide and airy street, closely adjoining a number of houses occupied by men of wealth and rank, who, let it be remembered, are themselves vitally interested, knowing well that fever is not long in crossing a street! And if such a state of things as we have above described, and for the accuracy of which description in the minutest particular we vouch, is to be found in a good neighbourhood, what must be the condition of other districts of the same city, known to be immeasurably worse?

Facts gathered from all parts of England, show beyond doubt how much misery and death, and loss to the living may be prevented, and how much the general sum of happiness may be increased, by proper arrangements. And yet, known causes of disease and death are allowed to continue in operation, and the obstinacy of ignorance for a time triumphs over the truthful deductions of science. At a meeting of the town-council of Bristol, last week, it was shown by Dr. Green and Dr. Kay that the deaths in that city from one remediable cause alone, namely, the accumulation of noxious decomposing matter in the river Frome, which is, in fact, nothing better than an open cesspool, could not be less than from 500 to 600 annually? Who will estimate the suffering endured from sickness, the distress caused by deprivation, and the pecuniary loss to the community, also resulting from the same cause? And yet remedy is delayed.

The mortality of Birkenhead has increased fearfully with the increase of the place. It appears that, whilst the deaths here were, in 1841, one in forty-five, in 1845, one in thirty-six, in 1846 they were one in twenty-eight and a half! Dr. Robinson has recently published a pamphlet on the subject, in which he shows that this increase results from the ill ventilation of the houses of the lower classes, the absence of house-drains, the existence of 2405 cesspools in the township, a want of care in the selection of sites for the foundations of new buildings, the imperfect construction of middens, the overcrowding of lodging-houses and places of sepulture, the too early occupation of newly-built houses, and the want of water. He calculates that there are 300 houses and 57 courts without water, the number of inhabitants in them being 2,437. How often must we write, that

PURE AIR AND PLenty OF WATER ARE THE TWO THINGS EVERY WHERE NEEDFUL.

A Glasgow paper furnishes a curious instance of the effect of ventilation, which would be laughable if it were not saddening. In a weaving mill near Manchester, where the ventilation was very bad, the proprietor caused a fan to be mounted, and so improved it greatly. What was the result? Why the operatives instead of thanking their employer for his attention to their comfort and health, made a formal complaint to him that the ventilator had increased their appetites, and therefore entitled them to a corresponding increase of wages! “By stopping the fan a part of the day,” says our authority, “the ventilation and voracity of the establishment were brought to a medium standard, and complaints ceased. The operatives’ wages would but just support them—any additional demands by their stomachs could

only be answered by draughts upon their backs, which were by no means in a condition to answer them.”

Poor things! The fan brought them better health, but they fancied they could not afford the luxury. Their course was as if, being well and enjoying their dinner, they had taken some deleterious compounds to produce sickness, and indispose them for eating.

We look for some advantage from the reports of the various commissioners appointed to inquire into improvement bills proposed by different towns, and which are now in the hands of members of Parliament. Although appointed in each case for a special purpose, much information as to the sanitary condition of towns will probably be obtainable from their reports, and the evidence laid before them, and a considerable impulse be given to the adoption of remedies for existing evils and abuses. In what light some of the corporations may appear seems to us doubtful.

The cost of these inquiries will be very great: we have heard, for example, that at Reading more than 6,000*l.* have been spent; but as they will necessarily shorten the business before Parliament, and prevent useless applications, in the long run, probably, they will lessen expenditure, and facilitate good legislation.

THE NEW MUSEUM OF ECONOMIC GEOLOGY, PICCADILLY.

THE mystery which, for a time, hung over the site, between Piccadilly and Jermyn-street, purchased by government; the rumours which went abroad, now that it was for a post-office, and then that it was for a museum; and more recently, when its appropriation was known, the asserted intention of forming shops in the Piccadilly front of the new building; have made it an object of constant inquiry on the part of correspondents, who have also manifested a desire to know what description of edifice would be erected. We are glad, therefore, now to be able to resolve the only unresolved points, by stating, that the building promises to be a handsome structure in the Italian style, highly creditable to Mr. Penne-
thorne, the architect, and that no part of it will be appropriated to shops.

The public entrance will be in Jermyn-street, and the entrance for the establishment in the Piccadilly front, which will be the principal in an architectural point of view, presenting on the ground-floor a series of large circular-headed windows, very deeply recessed down to the pavement, to give the effect of an arcade, small detached columns and pediments as dressings to the windows above, and a bold cornice and projecting roof, as at the Travellers’ and Reform Club-house. A series of ornamental panels will serve to display English and Irish marbles, and lead, as we hope, to their more extensive use in decoration. The door in Jermyn-street will be produced by the electrotype; and in a semicircular opening above it, there will be a sculptured tablet.

The ground floor will comprise an apartment to be called the Marble Hall, to be appropriated in accordance with its name, a lecture theatre about 55 feet square, and beyond that, extending to Piccadilly, apartments for various purposes. The grand staircase will lead from the Marble Hall to a fine apartment above, and again above that to a museum extending over the whole area, and lighted by extensive skylights as well as windows.

The lecture theatre, being in the centre part of the building, is lighted necessarily from the top, and exhibits in this as well as other respects, considerable skill. The upper part of the walls enclosing the skylight of the theatre, appear in a decorated form for a certain height above the floor of the topmost apartment, whence light is given to the theatre below, as it is also by means of an open area, railed, to the lower apartment. When we further say that there are galleries round the walls, it may be seen that the extent of floor for the reception of specimens, models, the mining records, &c., which are to be kept here, will be very great. Mr. Kelk is the builder employed.